RURAL CRIME IN SOUTH AFRICA: AN EXPLORATORY REVIEW OF ‘FARM
ATTACKS’ AND STOCKTHEFT AS THE PRIMARY CRIMES IN RURAL AREAS

Willie Clack¹,² and Anthony Minnaar³

ABSTRACT

Generally, over the years rural crime in South Africa has been largely ignored and/or under-
researched by academics, particularly from a criminological perspective. With the recent
exception of a focus on wildlife poaching in rural areas (or more specifically the poaching of
rhino), and to a lesser extent on stocktheft as a rural crime, most of the attention on rural crime
in South Africa has been directed towards the so-called ‘farm attacks’, which have, more often
than not, been taken out of context and/or politicised. Part of the problem in researching rural
crime in South Africa has been of a definitional nature. For instance, in farm attacks, who are the
‘farmers’ and what constitutes a ‘farm’? An example of the semantic confusion has been the fact
that Gauteng Province – the smallest of the nine provinces in land area, but the industrial and
economic heartland of South Africa – has the highest number of registered ‘smallholdings/plots’,
but many of the owners/residents of such properties live there because of a lifestyle choice and not
for any commercial or for-profit-farming enterprises. Also ignored in the analysis of rural crime
are many of the ‘other’ victims of farm attacks, namely the farm workers and members of their
families. Overall, as a rural crime, stocktheft in fact represents the biggest economic and crime
impact on rural economies even though the usual range of violent crimes also occur in rural areas.
This article seeks to broadly unpack rural crimes – with an exploratory focus on ‘farm attacks’
and stocktheft – within the context of South African areas outside of the major urban areas, inter-
alia touching on such aspects as the demise of the Commando System of rural protection and its
belated replacement with a National Rural Protection Plan in the late 1990s. From a number of
the reports on farm attacks it was generally found that the primary motive for farm attacks was
robbery and that such farm attacks should be dealt with and policed inclusively with all other
forms of rural crime including that of livestock theft, particularly within the structures of the 2011
National Rural Safety Strategy.

Keywords: Rural crime in South Africa; farm attacks; livestock theft; National Rural
Protection Plan; National Rural Safety Strategy.

INTRODUCTION: RURAL CRIME IN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Traditionally, research and the development and building of a distinct theory of crime in rural areas
has been the ‘poor [rural] cousin’ of mainstream criminology and largely ignored or neglected. Most
often, researchers, scholars and academics have merely ‘borrowed’ from the research designs
and criminological theory bank of the research approach to crime, victimology and policing of
densely populated urban settings – the cities – without examining the different and unique
circumstances, not only in terms of population densities, but also in types of crime, victimisation
variations and policing responses as applicable to the rural environment.

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In South Africa, the term ‘rural’ is usually used to denote communities in country districts (‘die platteland’) outside of urban or peri-urban communities, as defined by a ‘country lifestyle’ based on agricultural activities. In other words, farming communities centred on small towns and villages serving those rural areas that are usually sparsely populated and away from urban areas.

However, what has become obvious over the years is that rural farming communities in South Africa are not dissimilar to urban areas in terms of experiencing various forms of crime and violence. For example, if one looks closely at the so-called ‘farm attacks’, these most often result in robbery, assault, physical injuries and sometimes death (murder) – all categories of crime that occur in the cities and are largely replicated in rural areas. But, where rural crime becomes more rurally distinctive is when one looks at the nature of those crimes that occur in the farming areas where those ‘rural’ crimes represent a distinct direct impact on farming livelihoods and rural economies. A further example being the other primary rural crime, namely livestock theft, which has a tremendous impact not only on commercial farmers’ livelihoods (and by association that of farmworkers and their families), but also on the thousands of subsistence farmers in tribal authority communal lands where the traditional ‘cattle wealth’ barter economy, inter alia for use as ‘lobola’ (marriage price usually given by a prospective groom to the bride’s family) is still of great importance. Hence, the theft of cattle from such subsistence families has a greater impact on their daily survival in comparison to urban city dwellers that might, or might not, be involved in the formal and informal urban economy. Other crimes distinctive to rural areas being poaching (of all game) and theft of plant species, especially those on the endangered species lists, and the theft of farming equipment – all of which are integral to the direct economic survival of rural dwellers.

Be that as it may, since the mid-twentieth century criminological research has been done on various aspects of crime occurring in rural areas. As a consequence, over the years, a generic definition for research on rural crime has been developed, namely:

“Rural refers to those places with a lower population size and population density than urban localities. Social scientists, including criminologists, presume [authors’ emphasis] that the number and density of people living in an area influence crime rates and the kinds [authors’ emphasis again] of crimes mostly likely to occur there. Hence, understanding similarities and differences in expressions of crime in rural and urban places is important” (Coomber, Donnermeyer, McElrath & Scott, 2014: 117).

Of course, in comparative terms, rural is defined differently in many countries. For instance, in England, Wales and Scotland any town or village with less than 10 000 residents is classified as being ‘rural’, i.e. non-metropolitan areas. With the Industrial Revolution of the 1800s (in Western Europe and the US), and the concomitant rise of and population growth in cities, it was, therefore, not surprising that criminology took on an urban-centric focus since it was presumed by many criminologists (at the time) that: “areas with smaller and less dense populations had less crime, and that their crime problems were [somehow] less serious” (Coomber, Donnermeyer, McElrath & Scott, 2014: 118). As a consequence, research on rural crime problems was limited to a few individual sociologists cum criminologists with mainstream criminologists choosing rather to focus on the perceived ‘more serious’ urban social and crime problems emanating from the cities of the world.

One of the first academics/researchers, albeit as a ‘sociologist’, to look at rural crime per se was Marshall Clinard in the 1940s with his seminal study on rural criminal offenders. Clinard found some specific characteristics associated with rural offenders, namely: their “extensive mobility, resulting in recklessness and irresponsibility”. This perception of themselves as “mobile persons” led to them having an “impersonal conception of the world and emancipation from their
home communities” (in other words, they most often moved away from their home districts). This perception, Clinard found, led a large proportion of these ‘mobile’ rural offenders to commit their offences outside of their home communities—even if only in a neighbouring district or community. Clinard also found that two-thirds of his respondents were alone when first arrested (the ‘loner offender’ not associated with any criminal syndicate or youth gang). Clinard also, furthermore, established in his early rural crime study that farm offenders did not exhibit the characteristics of a “definite criminal social type”. He ascribed this to the fact that, firstly, their criminal behaviour did not start early on in their lives. Secondly, they exhibited scant knowledge of the more ‘professional’ urban criminal techniques and modus operandi in general. Thirdly, their criminal activities were not their sole means of livelihood. Lastly, that they did not conceive of themselves as criminals, since most of the crime they committed fell under property-related offences (Clinard, 1944: 38-45) (for example: stealing fruit or vegetables, poaching of game or stealing livestock—the latter two often for the ‘pot’).

While Clinard applied classical Offender Profile theories to his seminal study, his research did point to some very important differences in a rural offender profile versus criminals in urban settings. But, overall criminologists, when studying crime in rural areas, continued for many years to apply theories of crime and research based on the ‘urban model of social organisation’ to rural settings on the assumption that these theories provided the opportunity to understand those rural settings better, and to use them to account for, explain and categorise rural crime, victimisation patterns, local policing responses and the application of justice as occurring in rural areas (see Weisheit & Wells, 1996, for more detail on this approach).

In more recent times researchers have taken to customising Victims of Crime Surveys to rural settings by changing crime types, as well as trying to establish the specific impact (social, economic and otherwise) on self-contained localised rural communities of their specific experiences of crime. Since such communities are often close-knit, if the crime is perpetrated by ‘insiders’ as opposed to ‘outsiders’, i.e. coming from elsewhere other than the immediate district/community area, such insider-perpetrated crime often impacts negatively for many years thereafter on rural person-to-person, family-to-family and overall community trust relations.

Another interesting approach to researching crime in rural areas was the 2003 study by Mark Berg and Martin DeLisi on formerly incarcerated rural crime offenders. The researchers’ starting premise again being that the “criminal career paradigm had essentially ignored investigating offenders in rural areas” and posed the research question: ‘Do career criminals exist in rural America?’ To fill this void, Berg and DeLisi set about undertaking a survey of 331 former adult correctional offenders identified as having committed crime(s) in rural communities (in a mid-western state of the US). In their study, both the self-report and official records had indicated that rural criminal careers were characterised inter alia by: i) relatively few arrests (in an individual’s crime career); ii) short-lived criminal justice system involvements (i.e. incarceration had generally been for shorter periods/sentences or alternately were converted to a fine not imprisonment); and iii) little or no evidence of involvement in violent crime (i.e. overall rural crime can be termed of ‘lesser’ seriousness falling largely in the category of ‘petty’ theft and/or property-related crimes). Berg and DeLisi also found that the top ten percent of their sample strongly indicated that their crime(s) were largely driven by overlapping problems, such as alcoholism, substance abuse, mental health difficulties, early onset of antisocial behaviour, and low levels of educational qualifications (often being school dropouts). To cap these inter-linked problems, most exhibited frequent involvement (constant in and out) with the criminal justice system. Similarly then to most rural communities that have historically been characterised by exceedingly low crime rates, rural career offenders tended to be relatively ‘harmless’ criminals.
especially when compared to habitual offenders from urban areas commonly found in the criminological literature (see Berg & DeLisi, 2003: 317-325).

In 2004 Wells and Weisheit refocused their rural crime research and drew on community policing, crime mapping and the recent attention in urban settings being given to theories of social disorganisation, in an effort to better understand the social and environmental context within which crime (in rural areas) occurs. In their study they made use of the national US county-level data set in order to examine whether variables commonly used to predict urban crime patterns could well be applied similarly to more rural settings. The results showed that, although ecological and structural factors did a good job of predicting urban patterns of crime, they were less predictive of crime rates in the more rural areas of the US. Furthermore, they also found that the ‘basket’ of variables that best predicted urban crime rates were not identical to the set that best predicted rural crime rates (see Wells & Weisheit, 2004:1-22).

Another 2004 study (this time extending research on rural crime outside of the USA to Australia) was that of Patrick Jobes, Elaine Barclay, Herb Weinand and Joseph Donnermeyer, who analysed rural community structural measures (demographic, economic and social as reported in the various Australian censuses) in New South Wales, Australia and then compared this data with the officially reported crime statistics for these so-called rural local government areas (LGAs). This study used the Social Disorganisation Theory to examine variations in crime rates between different kinds of rural communities. They also developed a rural community typology listing six distinct types, which all exhibited unique crime characteristics with the structural measures being statistically associated with four types of crime. A further research finding of their study being that generally there was less crime (lower rate) in the rural areas studied than in Australian urban centres. Furthermore, that those rural communities showing greater cohesion and integration of their community structures had even less crime than those rural communities exhibiting poorer co-ordination of social structures. In other words, a highly disorganised rural community would have higher or the highest (relatively speaking to other LGAs) levels of reported crime. Clearly the levels and effectiveness of community and structural responses impacted directly on rural levels of crime being experienced by individual rural communities (Jobes, Barclay, Weinand & Donnermeyer, 2004: 114-140).

Despite this growing interest in rural crime, it remains an under-studied issue being served by a relatively small band of researchers and academics. Research on rural social disorganisation and crime ultimately being limited by a number of factors (in contrast to research on crime rates in urban areas), namely: inconsistent results; reliance on official crime statistics (i.e. the lack of no standard customising of victims of crime surveys for rural areas and applying all variables directly to rural victimisation rates. Neither disaggregating national crime statistics by pulling out crime stats only for rural areas or establishing specific crime categories to cater for the distinctiveness of rural crime); and the non-application in rural areas of the full Social Disorganisation and Crime Model, as developed and largely applied to urban cities (see Kaylen & Pridemore, 2013: for their application of the full model to rural areas in the UK using the British Crime Survey data).

One interesting recent study in 2012 by Matthew Giblin, George Burruss, Nicholas Corsaro and Joseph Schafer has taken a slightly different research approach to rural crime by examining rural crime victimisation and the determinants of self-protective behaviours in a sample of rural residents in the US. They used a modified Risk Interpretation Model with categories on risk, fear and victimisation experiences to establish a set of ‘predictors’. Their research results indicated that household protective behaviours (including the levels of collective efficacy of implemented household and community safety and security measures) were directly influenced by perceptions
and exposure of each household to risks and crime victimisation (Giblin, Burruss, Corsaro & Schafer, 2013: 493-517).

From this brief overview of existing rural crime research (from various international jurisdictions) it becomes clear that in terms of research on rural crime, most criminologists have barely ‘scratched the surface’ of rural crime information, which points to the need for more research in countries, worldwide, on crimes perpetrated in rural areas. This is even more relevant to the South African rural areas where there is a total dearth of scientific research-based studies.

SOUTH AFRICA AND ‘RURAL CRIME’

South African criminologists have, with few exceptions, neglected researching rural crimes in any depth, more so than elsewhere in the world. No customised victims of (rural) crime survey has, to the authors’ knowledge, ever been implemented in South Africa outside of the urban areas.

In terms of rural crime per se in South Africa the two primary crime categories that have had the greatest social, economic, physical and political impact are, namely:

1. So-called ‘farm attacks’ on farmers, farmworkers and their families often resulting in death and serious injury besides suffering from theft, robbery and other violent acts against them; and

2. Livestock theft per se wherein owners/farmers are the primary victims with ancillary impact on farmworkers in terms of loss of farmer income resulting in loss of farm jobs for workers, and negative impact on production of farm products for sale.

It needs to be mentioned here that, besides the above two broad categories of rural crime, there is a third category that in the last two decades has become a further burgeoning rural crime category, namely: poaching of and trafficking in wildlife (as a sub-category of conservation crime). But, this third category of rural crime, for the purposes of this article, is not discussed in any further detail at all. In this article the authors will try to give a brief crime overview of the situation in rural South Africa pertaining to these two broad crime categories.

South African context

The total population of South Africa (according to the latest mid-year 2017 population estimate by Statistics South Africa) is set at approximately 56.5 million, of which those living in small towns and rural areas is an estimated 30 percent of this total (Statistics African Statistics (StatsSA), 2017a: 1), whereas the six main urban centres (Greater Johannesburg: 7.86m; Cape Town: 3.74m; Durban: 3.44m; Germiston-Ekurhuleni: 3.17m; Pretoria: 2.92m; and Port Elizabeth: 1.3m) constitute 40 percent of this total (22.16 million) (World Atlas, 2017: np).

In the South African context, the agricultural sector is made up of two distinct categories of farmers, namely: subsistence farmers in the former homeland/tribal areas, and large-scale commercial farmers. However, the number of commercial farmers, i.e. those farming for profit and producing agricultural goods for sale to markets, has dropped from 66 000 in 1990 to approximately around 32 500 in 2016 (70-80% of whom are classified as being ‘white’), but there are another estimated 1.1 million (in 2000) engaged in subsistence or small-scale crop farming in the various designated tribal authority communal areas (former so-called homeland territories) largely under the control of traditional leaders (Orkin & Njobe, 2000: iii; Anon. 2016: np). Many of them are female farmers who are in that position since males are most often away as migrants working in the mines, in urban areas manufacturing industries or away working on commercial farms. The problem here being that farming in communal tribal lands they do not own the land except on a communal occupancy rights basis, which precludes them from ever obtaining development loans using the land as collateral from commercial banks to turn their farming
activities into a commercial-for-profit basis. Furthermore, in 2012 it was estimated by StatsSA that 638 000 people (farmers and farmworkers) were formally employed in the agricultural sector. This figure does not then include their family members, so in fact it has been further estimated that 8.5 million people in South Africa (15% of total estimated population) are directly or indirectly dependent upon agriculture for their employment and income (Department of Labour, 2016: 1).

‘FARM ATTACKS’
The whole concept of a separate crime category for farm attacks and murder of largely white farmers in the category of commercial farms has over the years become highly politicised. However, this article is not intended to delve into these arguments and counter-arguments, but rather attempts, as an exploratory investigation, to posit ‘farm attacks’ as a rural crime and attempts to establish the extent of these as incidents of rural crime.

South African statutory or common law does not define a so-called ‘farm murder’ and ‘farm attack’ as a specific crime category. The concept of ‘farm attack’ is used to refer to a number of different crimes committed against persons, specifically on farms or smallholdings (see Bezuidenhout, 2012: 11). But, the term ‘farm murder’ is also fraught with semantic definitional misconceptions in that a murder is a murder and using the term ‘farm’ before it simply denotes where it occurs and possibly the victim category and not as its users appear to intend, namely: to give it more value or weight in terms of the analysis of modus operandi, motives, target selection purposes and level of risk to only a certain sector of the population.

Furthermore, detractors of the use of the blanket term ‘farm attacks’ point to the lack of a similar focus when it comes to other sectors of the farming community, namely: similarly serious cases of assault or murder of black people on the same farms – some of these assaults being perpetrated by the farm owner(s)/manager(s) themselves or even Farm Watch patrollers/security offices of private security companies. These cases are rarely reported to the police largely because of fear of intimidation or dismissal and/or eviction (of their whole family) from the farm where they are employed – a result many farm workers simply cannot contemplate given their precarious economic existence (low wages and long working hours) and widespread poverty in rural areas of South Africa.

Many of the ‘farm attack’ crimes appear to have been perpetrated because of the opportunity presented by poor security measures on farms and/or farmhouses, the perception by criminals that some farmers hold substantial cash in their farmhouses (to be used for the month-end payment of worker wages or derived from the selling of produce and livestock for cash directly off the farm) (see Mistry & Dhlamini, 2003; Committee of Inquiry into Farm Attacks, 2003).

Over the years, for crime analytical purposes, the South African Police Service (SAPS) has continued to list these violent rural crimes as, and use the term, ‘farm attacks’ (in a separate database to overall crime statistics (see explanation of this below). This, unfortunately, has reinforced the perceptions by some organisations that this type of rural crime is ‘organised’ and ‘militaristic’ in its implementation, (i.e. the use of terms such as ‘scoping and planning’ an attack by ‘scouting’ and selecting a suitably ‘soft target’; ‘breaching (farm) perimeter; ‘penetrating’ the farmhouse – all essential militaristic context terminology) and is, therefore, not purely criminal in nature. This has also clouded the analysis of possible solutions to the violent crime experienced on farms in the rural areas.

Broadly, the term ‘farm attack’ has been used by various organisations to denote violent crime against mainly white commercial farmers (including the killing (murder) of this group and members of their families). However, it was only in the 2001/02 financial year and until 2006/07 – when this practice was discontinued – that the SAPS instituted a separate sub-category in the official crime statistics released as part of their Annual Reports referring to certain crimes (using
the blanket term ‘farm attacks’ and ‘farm murders’) on farms and smallholdings (Burger, 2013: np).

This category was based on the National Operational Co-ordinating Committee (NOCOC) of the SAPS’ 2001 formulation of a comprehensive definition to assist the work of the Committee of Inquiry into Farm Attacks (Committee of Inquiry into Farm Attacks, 2003: 8). However, the NOCOC definition was only much later officially adopted and inserted in the 2011 National Rural Safety Strategy document of the SAPS that further refined the NOCOC definition of a farm attack as being:

“Acts of violence against person/s on farms and small holdings refer to acts aimed at person/s residing on, working on or visiting farms and small holdings, whether with the intent to murder, rape, rob or inflict bodily harm. In addition, all acts of violence against the infrastructure and property in the rural community aimed at disrupting legal farming activities as a commercial concern, whether the motive/s are related to ideology, land disputes, land issues, revenge, grievances, racist concerns or intimidation are included” (SAPS, 2011: 8).

Excluded from this definition were any cases emanating from domestic violence, abuse of alcohol or as a result of a vaguely defined “commonplace social interaction” of persons on farms (SAPS, 2011: 8). At a later stage the SAPS had included such crimes as intimidation, arson and malicious damage to property as part of the definition of a farm attack (Parliamentary Monitoring Group (PMG). 2016: np). However, in the crime codes of the SAPS’ Crime Administration System (CAS) there is in fact no official crime category identified specifically as a “farm attack” or “farm murder”. The crimes mentioned in the SAPS’ 2011 National Rural Strategy definition – such as murder, rape and assault – are recorded at the police station in the district where they occur. Also included would be ancillary crimes such as robbery, burglary (breaking-and-entry), and vehicle hijacking. Rural police stations’ resident Crime Information Management Officer (if they have one) or the Station Commander are then expected, in their monthly crime stats (CAS) reports, to report any incidents meeting the criteria in the above definition to the Crime Information Analysis Centre (CIAC) at SAPS head office for inclusion on a separate, stand-alone database (this was an instruction issued in 1996 for implementation as from the beginning of 1997 by the newly established CIAC). But, these reported crimes from rural areas are still then part of the different crime code categories and, therefore, formed part of the overall annual national crime statistics (Wilkinson, 2017: np).

But, such broad definitions, without distinguishing between commercial farmers, subsistence farmers or residents on so-called ‘smallholdings’, who might not be engaged in any agricultural pursuits as a living, complicate any attempt at applying statistical analysis to such a broad crime category as “farm attacks” or “farm murders”, especially in comparative terms with other sub-categories of victims (e.g. mini-bus taxi owners; alleged witches; members of emergency services or even the police). Some of the statistical analysis, in extrapolating the risk of being murdered as a white farmer, have only made use of the estimated figure of 32 000 commercial farmers in the country. Such risk factor analysis on only the selected statistics pertaining to farm attacks and resulting murders accordingly vary with some organisations only including the figures for actual farmers killed and excluding family members, farm workers, farm worker families, retirees and even visitors that might have been caught up and killed in a farm attack (Burger, 2013: np) (see also Solidarity, 2012). Some statistics do not differentiate between a murder of the occupant farmer and resident/visiting black people killed in the course of the crimes committed during a farm attack or distinguish between a ‘farm murder’ and, for instance, the murder of a farm
worker by a farmer themselves, i.e. not as a result of an attack on the farm. In some of the analyses, such factors as potential domestic violence as a cause of a murder are not factored in at all (Manby, 2002: 87).

In some instances, murders in rural areas have been reported in the media as a “farm murder”, but in fact did not occur on a farm (in accordance with the SAPS’s definition that agricultural/farming activities should be the primary activity pursued on the property). A recent example of such ‘misreporting’ being two murders that occurred in March 2017 on a housing estate near Nottingham Road in KwaZulu-Natal (under the newspaper article title: ‘More arrests in brutal KZN farm attack murders’ (see Govender, 2017: np).). Such semantic and definitional inaccuracies do not assist researchers to accurately analyse all rural crime.

To provide some sort of context to this exploratory examination of farm attacks – as a primary generator of a range of crimes occurring in rural areas – we turn to a brief review of some of the statistics that have been presented over the years by various rural farming organisations and the official reported figures.

In April 2001 the then SAPS National Commissioner, Jackie Selebi, appointed a Committee of Inquiry into Farm Attacks with the view to examine:

“…the ongoing spate of attacks on farms, which include violent criminal acts such as murder, robbery, rape, etc. to determine the motives and factors behind these attacks and to make recommendations on their findings” (Committee of Inquiry into Farm Attacks, 2003: 6).

To this effect, a call for submissions from all roleplayers and individuals wanting to provide information on all aspects of farm attacks was opened to the public. Selebi had further instructed the appointed Committee to endeavour to present an interim report within three months (a brief one was so submitted) and the final report by the end of that year. The Committee of Inquiry, however, felt that this deadline was unrealistic and that to better serve the overall analysis on farm attacks they decided, besides collecting and analysing all submissions, to evaluate all the work/research already done or published on the topic in South Africa. In addition, the Committee made a principled decision to conduct its own research, since “much of the previous work done was also responsible for some incorrect perceptions about farm attacks… [and] Often, in their reports, researchers relied on unsubstantiated opinions of previous researchers” (Committee of Inquiry into Farm Attacks, 2003: Foreword).

Until 1997, no official statistics had been kept by the SAPS specifically on farm attacks, since rural crime was merely registered at police stations under the specific crime codes, such as for murder, attempted murder, rape and robbery together with similar crimes as occurring in urban areas. In 1998, the SAPS’ NOCOC had made farm attacks a so-called ‘priority crime’, similarly to the other listed priority crimes of gang violence, taxi violence and cash-in-transit robberies. The NOCOC definition was then accordingly used by the SAPS’ CIAC for crime stats analytical purposes (Committee of Inquiry into Farm Attacks, 2003: 17).

However, the Committee of Inquiry did find that several local and national farmers’ agricultural organisations had kept their own statistics. For instance, the South African Agricultural Union (SAAU, now AgriSA), the umbrella organisation for most commercial farmers in South Africa, had in 1991 started collecting their own statistics on ‘farm attacks’. The Committee, assisted by CIAC’s crime analysts had combined the SAAU’s statistics from 1991 with those in the SAPS’ separate rural crime database and, thereby, established that the number of farm attacks had increased from 327 with 66 murders recorded by SAAU in 1991 to an annual total, eleven years later in 2001, of 1 011 with 147 deaths in that year. Over this same period (1991-
there were 6 122 farm attacks and 1 254 killings (as recorded jointly by the SAAU and SAPS) (Committee of Inquiry into Farm Attacks, 2003: 2). The annual farm attack stats as collected by SAAU/AGRISA for the period 1991-1997 and as submitted to the Committee were as follows:

Table 1: Farm attacks and farm murders recorded by SAAU/AGRISA: 1991-1997

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farm attacks</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>442</td>
<td>442</td>
<td>551</td>
<td>468</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>3 065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm murders</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>677</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Note: These are annual figures January-December.

(Source: Committee of Inquiry into Farm Attacks, 2003: 19).

These figures were subsequently, at a much later stage, revised (see Table 2 below).

Table 2: Farm attacks and farm murders as revised by TAU/AGRISA: 1991-1997

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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farm attacks</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm murders</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>445</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: These are annual figures January-December.

(Source: Roets, 2018: 37)

It is unclear from these revised farm attack stats (as verified by Transvaal Agricultural Union (SA)) (TAU SA as cited in Roets, 2018: 36) why there is such a wide discrepancy in both the recorded number of farm attacks and farm murders (as supplied by SAAU/AGRISA to the Committee of Inquiry (as in Table 1 above). The later revised figures would appear to gainsay and downplay the case made out to the Committee, not only of the extent and seriousness of the farm attacks, but also the far larger number of recorded incidents initially provided.

The NOCOC and CIAC had both also submitted to the Committee of Inquiry their own separate analysis for the years 1997-2001, which, although the Committee felt “had some defects” (Committee of Inquiry into Farm Attacks, 2003: 15), were helpful to the Committee in indicating certain trends as contained in the more detailed case information on farm attacks as reported to the SAPS (Committee of Inquiry into Farm Attacks, 2003: 15 & 19). These recorded farm attack statistics for the period 1997 to 2001 are given below in Table 3:

Table 3: Farm attacks and farm murders recorded by NOCOC & CIAC: 1997-2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1997</th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>TOTALS*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farm attacks</td>
<td>CIAC</td>
<td>433</td>
<td>769</td>
<td>813</td>
<td>906</td>
<td>1 011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NOCOC</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>835</td>
<td>853</td>
<td>894</td>
<td>962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm murders</td>
<td>CIAC</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>147</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NOCOC</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Discrepancies in totals due to no NOCOC stats for 1997. But there are annual differences to note as well.

(Source: Committee of Inquiry into Farm Attacks, 2003: 19-20).

At the time, the Committee of Inquiry had noted that these recorded cases of farm attacks by the NOCOC and CIAC had differed slightly, since the NOCOC reporting system was primarily for the operational purposes of the SAPS to respond as quickly as possible, and in some cases,
may not have been updated at a later stage. For instance, if a victim had died much later. But, the Committee was of the opinion that the SAPS’ combined databases on farm attacks was “about 90% reliable” (Committee of Inquiry into Farm Attacks, 2003: 19).

Subsequent to 2001, the SAPS had then released (together with the national crime stats) the CIAC’s separate collected database statistics on farm attacks and farm murders until the 2006/07 financial (where after the then National Commissioner Selebi had placed an embargo on the release of any separate farm attack statistics and no such statistics were ever released for the three-year period 2007 to 2009, while from 2010 to 2018 figures were publicly released by National Commissioner Phiyega (in 2014 at the hearing on farm attacks of the South African Human Rights Commission) and again in 2016 and 2017 by Acting Commissioner Phahlane. Below (Table 4) are the revised, consolidated statistics as recorded by the SAPS, and are compared to those provided by AgriSA/TAAU – the latter as from 2013 together with AfriForum’s collected information – for the just more than twenty-year period of 1996/97 to 2017/18.

Table 4: Farm attacks and farm murders: SAPS & AGRISA/TAU/AfriForum consolidated statistics: 1996/7-2017/18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>SAPS*</th>
<th>Farm attacks</th>
<th>Farm murders</th>
<th>Year** AGRISA/TAU</th>
<th>Farm attacks</th>
<th>Farm murders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1996/7</td>
<td>433</td>
<td>88</td>
<td></td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997/8</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>153</td>
<td></td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>74</td>
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<tr>
<td>1998/9</td>
<td>827</td>
<td>148</td>
<td></td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999/2000</td>
<td>823</td>
<td>140</td>
<td></td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000/01</td>
<td>908</td>
<td>140</td>
<td></td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001/02</td>
<td>1,069</td>
<td>140</td>
<td></td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002/03</td>
<td>903</td>
<td>103</td>
<td></td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003/04</td>
<td>773</td>
<td>88</td>
<td></td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004/05</td>
<td>694</td>
<td>82</td>
<td></td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005/06</td>
<td>636</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>55</td>
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<td>2006/07</td>
<td>794</td>
<td>86</td>
<td></td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007/08***</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008/09***</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009/10***</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010/11</td>
<td>532</td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011/12</td>
<td>523</td>
<td>56</td>
<td></td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>48</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>566</td>
<td>59</td>
<td></td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013/14</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>57</td>
<td></td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014/15</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>61</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015/16</td>
<td>446</td>
<td>49</td>
<td></td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016/17</td>
<td>478</td>
<td>66</td>
<td></td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017/18</td>
<td>561</td>
<td>47 (62)****</td>
<td></td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Note: The SAPS Crime Stats are recorded for the financial year 1 April to 31 March for each year. ** Recorded as for calendar year 1 January-31 December. *** No SAPS Crime Stats on farm attacks released for these years. **** There appears to be some discrepancy in this figure. The figure of 62 was provided by the SAPS in a presentation to the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee in May 2018 (see SAPS, 2018b: np).

(Source: SAPS, 2018; AGRISA, 2018: 64; Groenewald, 2018: np; Roets, 2018: 33; 37).
It is not clear from the quoted records of AgriSA and AfriForum why there is such a discrepancy in the number of farm attacks, with the gap (lower numbers for AgriSA/TAAU and AfriForum) only narrowing around 2015. The same trend appears to be evident with the number of farm murders recorded, with the overall lower number and in some years higher than those provided by the SAPS, but essentially tracking closer to the SAPS figures from 2003 onwards. The higher number of incidents recorded by the SAPS possibly being ascribed to their collection via the CAS from all rural police stations of all such incidents reported to them as occurring in rural areas, and not merely on the identified commercial farmers (approximately 32 000 in number) that might have been reported to AgriSA as an organisation representing the organised (commercial) agriculture sector as registered with them. However, these statistics give a reasonably accurate overview figure of the extent and incidence of both farm attacks and farm murders for the whole of South Africa. However, if one would like to establish an average figure for farm murders only, given the different definitional interpretations of site (farms/smallholdings) and target population category (commercial farmers/farm workers/resident farmer and worker families and even non-farming residents on farm properties especially small holdings such as retirees — all excluding subsistence farmers and their families), then for the twenty-two-year period of 1996-2017 one can posit an approximate averaged-out figure of 60 farm murders per year. In any crime terms internationally, that is of significant analytical import, even given the high figures for the total number of murders in South Africa over the same period (approximately 20 000 murders annually for the period 1997 to 2006 and just over an average of 17 000 per year for the second ten-year period of 2007 to 2016) (See SAPS, 2008 & 2018a: np).

If one sets aside the emotive, often media-driven and contrasting views of farm murders and farm attacks, over the years there have been several research studies looking at the issue from a research perspective. Prior to the Committee of Inquiry into Farm Attacks 2003 report, a National Intelligence Co-ordinating Committee (NICOC) report on farm attacks held that 99 percent of the attacks on farms and smallholdings were motivated primarily by robbery, but also often resulted in the crimes of murder, assault and rape (Britz & Seyesi, 1998: 18). In the research undertaken by Mistry and Dlamini in 2001 and the 2003 Committee of Inquiry into Farm Attacks, both had tried to delve deeper into motives behind the farm attacks. In 2000/01 Mistry and Dhlamini had interviewed 48 offenders that had committed crimes during a ‘farm attack’ between the period January 1997 and February 1998, and who were at the time of the interviews serving prison sentences (Mistry & Dlamini, 2001: v). The primary finding of the Mistry and Dhlamini study being that robbery was the motive in 90 per cent of the cases examined with a third of the respondents also having previously committed similar farm attacks. Furthermore, that most of the attacks were well planned, with the attackers spending between three to seven days on the farms studying the movements of the occupants before the attack. The offenders also reported that in the robbery-motivated attacks the victims were injured or killed if they were uncooperative, retaliated or could identify the offenders. It was also revealed that younger offenders tended to be more anxious (inexperienced) and sometimes had panicked during the attacks, which also contributed to the victims being injured or killed. It was also found that the farm attacks especially those resulting in a death had been accompanied by high levels of violence by means of either a shooting, stabbing, burning and assault of the victims. However, 50 percent of the respondents had said that the violence could have been avoided if the victims had co-operated or reacted quicker to their instructions (to tell them where their firearms were kept, money was kept or where the farm vehicles’ keys were, as well as not retaliating physically against the attackers. Furthermore, that in 48 percent of the cases it was reported that they had selected the targeted farm due to information about the availability of money and lack of security on those farms. With reference to the aspect
of a lack of farm security in many of the cases the perpetrators reported that they knew that security was almost non-existent on most farms and that police stations were far away. In other words, they had assessed the risk of being caught and believed their chances of being apprehended and arrested by the police were small. It was also mentioned that present or past employees on farms had often told the farm attackers that the farmers on the targeted farm kept money in safes in their homes. Only ten percent of the interviewees said they had selected the particular farm because they had a grudge against the resident farmer (Mistry & Dhlamini, 2001: 15-20 & 37).

The Committee of Inquiry into Farm Attacks had also looked closely at the motives behind farm attacks. Its research methodology included an analysis of more than 3 500 police case dockets (of the farm attacks database of NOCOC from 1998 to 2001), interviews with incarcerated farm murderers, as well as oral and written submissions from the public and interested organisations, including several academics. The final research findings of the Committee of Inquiry found no evidence to support claims of the existence of a sinister, third force, politicised or criminal, that was specifically targeting white farmers for attack. Based on the case dockets analysed, it was found that there was a political or racial motive in only a fraction of cases. In most cases (89.3%), the primary motive was robbery. This finding was, in line with the findings of the Mistry-Dlamini study, which had undertaken interviews with 40 incarcerated convicted persons of ‘farm’ murders and robberies. Furthermore, intimidation featured in seven percent of the cases, while those with a political or racial motive was found in only two percent of cases and labour-related issues featuring in 1.6 percent of cases. The Committee of Inquiry also interviewed fifty investigating officers with follow-up telephonic interviews with a further thirty-six investigating officers dealing with specific cases of farm attacks. All the investigating officers interviewed felt that that the primary motive in most cases they had investigated was robbery with, in their view, very few being politically or racially motivated farm attacks. Similarly, the fifteen state advocates from the offices of the Directorate of Public Prosecution interviewed held the same view (Committee of Inquiry into Farm Attacks, 2003: 411).

The Committee of Inquiry’s findings, and those of the 2001 study by Mistry and Dhlamini, corroborate those of the SAPS’ CIAC reports on farm attacks, who for years have maintained that many of the characteristics of farm attacks correspond with those of so-called ‘house robberies’ in urban areas. In both farm attacks and urban home invasions, criminals will not hesitate to use torture to extract information from their victims (for more detail on urban house robberies see Zinn, 2008 & 2010). The big difference, given the remoteness of farms, is that attackers on farms have much more time and are less at risk of being caught in the act by either the police, private security companies or neighbours. The aspect of rural ‘remoteness’ has been a significant factor in the higher levels of violence associated with farm attacks in general as opposed to other forms of robbery, e.g. cash-in-transit heists and vehicle hijackings (Burger, 2013: np).

Robbery as a motive was a logical outcome and both the Mistry-Dlamini 2001 study and the Committee of Inquiry report, which highlighted that this was because of the generally lax security measures on farms (soft target), providing the opportunity for the crime, perpetrator’s assumptions that farmers would have cash on hand for payment of wages, especially if they were conducting other business from farmhouse premises, such as selling milk, cheese, small livestock (sheep, pigs, chickens or goats), fruit and vegetables, etc., as well as going after the firearms that many farmers owned (Mistry & Dhlamini, 2001: 5 & 16; Committee of Inquiry into Farm Attacks, 2003: 415).

Similar to the 2001-2003 Committee of Inquiry into Farm Attacks, the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) had in 2003 also held their own Inquiry into Human rights Violations in Farming Communities. The SAHRC 2003 Inquiry had found that, according to their
final report: “…all forms of violence and crime perpetrated against members of the [farming] communities constitute a violation of human rights [that should be] abhorred and strongly condemned” and that levels of violent crime continued to escalate against both farm dwellers and farm owners and are unacceptable. Furthermore, that the culture of violence in farming communities operates in an environment of criminal impunity. In addition, the 2003 SAHRC Inquiry found that the levels of service delivery of the SAPS were poor and ineffective, and that as a consequence, criminal acts were under reported. Overall, the SAHRC had found in 2003 that there was a lack of agreement amongst stakeholders as to the root causes leading to violence in farming communities. (South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), 2003: 187-189).

Five years after the 2003 SAHRC Inquiry report the SAHRC did a follow up on their previous inquiry of 2003, but which was more focused on the issue of land tenure security, farm safety, and labour relations in farming communities and not on farm attacks per se. However, the SAHRC 2008 inquiry report did find that, in relation to farm attacks: The underlying cause of ‘farm attacks’ was predominantly attributed to criminal motive; the use of the terminology around ‘farm killings’ was stereotypical and divisive in that it served to suggest that farm owners who were victims of crime were more important than other victims of these murders; and that it did not include many of the other forms of violence (e.g. violence against women, domestic violence, abuse and assault of women and children) that were prevalent in farming communities. (South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), 2003: 2008: 10, 20, 51-52, 56).

Just over ten years after the release of the extensive Committee of Enquiry into Farm Attacks report, and their own 2003 inquiry report, and five years after their 2008 report, the SAHRC, again after receiving a large number of complaints about human rights abuses in farming communities, had established a national investigative hearing into ‘safety and security challenges in farming communities’. The public hearings were hosted in September and October 2014, with the final report submitted to Cabinet in August 2015 with it being publicly released in November of that year (South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), 2015: 9).

Similarly to the 2001-2003 Committee of Inquiry into Farm Attacks, the SAHRC 2014 hearings had received submissions from various government departments, farming interest groups, and unions. Many of the submissions from farming organisations focused on the following issues; continued obstacles/problems being encountered by rural residents around the inadequate levels of service delivery by police in farming communities; their dissatisfaction with the terminology used to describe acts of violence on farms; farm owners again pushed for the government and the police to keep separate statistics on the prevalence of ‘farm attacks and/or murders’ (this within the context of the non-release of such separate crime stats since the 2009/10 reporting year; and the request by farm owners that ‘farm attacks and/or murders’ should again be listed by the SAPS as a national priority crime – this within the stated “unacceptable high levels of violence and crime experienced by the farming community” (South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), 2016: 9).

Among the primary recommendations made by the SAHRC 2015 report were that the: “…SAPS and the NPA [National Prosecuting Authority] step up their involvement in combating the crimes against farming communities”, as well as recommending that farming communities be classified as: “…a vulnerable group” within South African society. In relation to actual farm security, a further recommendation being that Farm Watches should be incorporated into the local Community Police Forum (CPF) structures (SAHRC, 2015: 9). Many of the SAHRC 2003, 2008 and 2014 hearings findings had resonated with the submissions and findings of the 2003 Committee of Inquiry and reveal perceptions and resentments at the lack of adequate and effective
policing of rural areas and farming communities (see later section on rural safety that further examines these farm attacks).

Besides farm attacks (and the accompanying violent crime in those attacks) as a primary rural crime, rural residents and farming communities as a whole are subjected, as primary victims, to the crime of the theft of livestock.

LIVESTOCK THEFT IN SOUTH AFRICA

The economic impact of stock theft on organised agriculture is huge. In South Africa, livestock theft is the only crime committed on farms, which is indicated separately in the national crime statistics. It was also declared a priority crime in the 2011 National Rural Safety Strategy of the SAPS (SAPS, 2011: 1 & 29).

Number of livestock stolen

In Figure 1 below, all the livestock theft cases as per the definition in the Stock Theft Act 57 of 1959 have been included, since livestock theft cases reported to the SAPS do not specify the type of livestock stolen. Determining the extent of livestock theft purely on the basis of the number of cases reported is problematic, since there are other variables that also need to be considered. In certain regions more poultry, donkeys and horses are stolen, with these being defined as livestock by the National Livestock Theft Prevention Forum (NSTPF) (Clack, 2018: 5).

Figure 1: Number of livestock reported as stolen: 1995/96-2017/18

(Source: SAPS, 2018c: np).
It is apparent from Figure 1 that since 2013/14 there has been a gradual rise in the number of livestock units stolen, irrespective of the type of animal, reaching, in farming terms, unacceptably high figures. From Figure 1 can be discerned that, on average, for the last 20 years between 150 000 to 200 000 livestock are stolen in South Africa every year.

**Number of stocktheft cases**

Table 5 below indicates the actual number of livestock theft cases reported to the SAPS for the period 2005 to 2017.

**Table 5: Number of stocktheft cases as per SAPS Crime stats: 2005/6-2017/18**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No of cases reported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005/6</td>
<td>26 526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006/7</td>
<td>26 155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007/8</td>
<td>26 053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008/9</td>
<td>27 255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009/10</td>
<td>29 428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010/11</td>
<td>26 942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011/12</td>
<td>27 611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>26 465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013/14</td>
<td>24 534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014/15</td>
<td>24 965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015/16</td>
<td>24 715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016/17</td>
<td>26 902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017/18</td>
<td>28 849</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: SAPS, 2018c: np).

While the data provided in Figure 1 establishes that declines occurred in certain years these declines, but also the increases, follow a similar pattern for most other serious crimes in South Africa. The reason for the increases and decreases is not known since there are a variety of variables that may or may not play a role. However, declines and increases can broadly be ascribed to many different factors, inter alia institution of rural CPFs, rollout of the National Rural Safety Strategy, community and sector policing, etc. Other factors that also need to be taken into account in this context, such as an improvement in the number of cases reported, the modus operandi of the offenders that may over time have changed or livestock organised crime syndicates becoming more involved in cattle theft (See Clack, 2013). The fact that it is lucrative to steal livestock should be borne in mind since livestock does not lose value similarly to that of other commodities, which has been experienced since the economic crisis starting in 2008. While livestock does have price variations due to seasonal changes, age, physical condition, a ready illegal market, etc., its value does not automatically decrease upon theft such as a stolen car or cell phone that loses more than 50 percent of their value when sold in the illegal markets.

However, overall livestock theft declines have been ascribed to the establishment in June 1995 of the National Stock Theft Forum (NSTF) and the involvement, active role and the joint efforts of all the role player members of the NSTF – all being credited with playing a significant role in reducing livestock theft in South Africa since 1995 (Clack, 2016:4). However, the 2017/18 figure of 28 849 reported cases of livestock was a new five-year high, almost reaching the 15-year highpoint of 29 428 reached in the 2009/10 reporting year.
Number of cattle, sheep and goats stolen

Figure 2 below shows the number of cattle, sheep and goats stolen by year for the years 2013/14 to 2017/18. These figures, unlike those in Figure 1, relate only to cattle, sheep and goats (as the primary livestock stolen in the crime of stocktheft). Other animals, as per the legal definition, have been excluded.

**Figure 2: Cattle, sheep and goats stolen: 2013/14-2017/18**

The highest numbers of stolen livestock are represented by the ‘sheep’ category. A good reason for this being that they are more easily herded, smaller and have far higher numbers being farmed in the country than either cattle or goats. Overall, an annual average of all three categories stolen is approximately 170 000 (2013/14) increasing to just over 200 000 in 2017/18.

Proportion of livestock theft to other crimes

Table 6 below provides the comparison in terms of livestock theft as a percentage of the total annual number of reported cases of serious crime cases for the period 2009/10 to 2017/18.

**Table 6: Livestock theft in relation to other crimes in South Africa**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of serious crimes reported</th>
<th>Livestock theft cases</th>
<th>Livestock theft cases as a percentage of all serious crimes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009/2010</td>
<td>2 121 887</td>
<td>32 380</td>
<td>1.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010/2011</td>
<td>2 071 487</td>
<td>30 144</td>
<td>1.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011/2012</td>
<td>2 016 316</td>
<td>30 949</td>
<td>1.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012/2013</td>
<td>2 281 704</td>
<td>29 894</td>
<td>1.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013/2014</td>
<td>2 338 154</td>
<td>28 026</td>
<td>1.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014/2015</td>
<td>2 206 505</td>
<td>24 965</td>
<td>1.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015/16</td>
<td>2 249 701</td>
<td>24 715</td>
<td>1.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016/17</td>
<td>2 208 256</td>
<td>26 902</td>
<td>1.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017/18</td>
<td>2 100 928</td>
<td>28 849</td>
<td>1.38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Sources: SAPS, 2018c: np).
However, of significance to farmers is the fourth column: livestock theft cases as a percentage of all serious crimes, since this figure determines the number of detectives assigned for duty at livestock theft units. Accordingly, since 2009/10 there has occurred an annual reduction of detectives assigned to rural area stocktheft investigation units. This factor has further exacerbated, in the eyes of farmers, the perceived general neglect by the SAPS in attending to rural crime.

While livestock theft would appear to make up only a small percentage (fraction) of overall serious crime cases, this does not indicate the critical impact on farming communities, not only in crime terms, but also in terms of economic negative impacts and for future food security. Interestingly, in the latest Victims of Crime Survey undertaken by StatsSA it was reported that the most common crime experienced in 2016/17 was housebreaking or burglary (53%) followed by theft of livestock (11%) and home robbery (10%) (StatsSA, 2017b: 1 & 10).

Compared internationally in terms of rural crimes versus overall crime, it would appear that South Africa has a larger percentage of other crimes compared to livestock theft. For instance, livestock theft in other countries forms a larger part of the overall crimes that influence the community. Examples of this in Africa being in: Rwanda: 5.3 percent; Tanzania: 15.3 percent; and Kenya: 12.9 percent (for more detail on rural crime in Kenya see: Bunei & Barasa, 2017). In countries such as Australia (see Barclay, Donnermeyer, Scott & Hogg, 2007) and Cambodia (Hunt, 2004: np) livestock theft in fact comprises the highest total number crimes committed on farms (Clack, 2016: 3).

Claims that livestock theft is not of much significance, based simply on numbers, can have serious implications, since the economic impact and use of livestock in rural areas are not then being correctly assessed. Livestock serves a multi-purpose within communal and commercial systems of farming. Although the systems are comparable, the uses and economic impact of livestock vary considerably across countries and across regions in a country (see Shackleton, Shackleton, Nethilulvhi & Mathabela, 2005: 127; Jarvis, 1988: 59).

Value of all livestock stolen, recovered and resulting financial loss
Table 7 indicates values in Rands of stolen and recovered livestock for the years 2010/11 to 2017/18 and also indicates the loss differential between the two.

Table 7: Value of all livestock stolen, recovered and resulting financial loss: 2010/11-2017/2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Stolen</th>
<th>Recovered</th>
<th>Loss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007/08</td>
<td>R507 956 400</td>
<td>R192 641 600</td>
<td>R315 314 800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008/09</td>
<td>R547 955 600</td>
<td>R210 710 500</td>
<td>R337 245 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009/10</td>
<td>R619 510 800</td>
<td>R224 890 800</td>
<td>R394 620 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010/11</td>
<td>R655 814 600</td>
<td>R250 884 300</td>
<td>R404 930 300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011/12</td>
<td>R830 906 600</td>
<td>R344 271 900</td>
<td>R486 634 700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>R757 155 750</td>
<td>R282 034 950</td>
<td>R475 120 800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013/14</td>
<td>R788 536 200</td>
<td>R277 475 800</td>
<td>R511 060 400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014/15</td>
<td>R819 045 200</td>
<td>R301 452 200</td>
<td>R517 593 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015/16</td>
<td>R 877 381 700</td>
<td>R309 211 200</td>
<td>R568 170 500</td>
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<td>2016/17</td>
<td>R1 058 806 200</td>
<td>R324 285 400</td>
<td>R734 520 800</td>
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<tr>
<td>2017/18</td>
<td>R1 222 352 592</td>
<td>R344 104 296</td>
<td>R878 248 296</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: SAPS Stock Theft Unit Head Office Ops, 2007-2017, as cited in Clack, 2013: 87; 2018: 12)
As can be discerned from Table 7, the value of this stolen livestock rose from approximately R508 million (about USD$35 million at current exchange rate) in 2007/08 to just over R831 million in 2011/12 to more than R1.2 billion (approximately USD$87 million) in 2017.

**Non-reporting of cases of livestock theft**

However, in South Africa, it is a trait that a large number of economic crimes are never reported to the authorities and livestock theft is no exception to this fact. Statistics South Africa reported in 2011 in their annual Victims of Crime Survey that only 40.1 percent of the victims of livestock theft had reported their livestock theft case to the police. In other words, there was an under-reporting of almost 60 percent of livestock theft by victims. In 2014 the non-reporting statistic for livestock rose to 64.4 percent with another increase to an all-time non-reporting high in 2015 of 70.7 percent (StatsSA, 2012: 3, 39; 2015: 56; 2016: 65).

The non-reporting of stock theft cases by livestock owners can be attributed to various reasons. Firstly, 31.8 percent of livestock theft cases are not reported due to a lack of trust in the capability of the SAPS to recover the stolen stock and/or to prosecute the case successfully. This perception by livestock owners is perfectly understandable if one considers the fact that only four percent of victims are informed that an arrest has been made or that stolen livestock has been recovered (Singh, 2005: 43). Secondly, 30.2 percent of livestock owners believe that it is not an important enough crime to report to the authorities. This may be true of small livestock, such as chickens, but not of larger livestock with a high monetary value, such as cattle. Thirdly, 11.8 percent of the victims of livestock theft use other methods to resolve the crimes, such as to report it to local authorities or neighbourhood/farm watches. In poorer rural communities, this has a high prevalence as there is still a high sense of community justice. Fourthly, in 8.8 percent of the cases the SAPS was not available or reachable to report the theft of livestock (Singh, 2005: 43; Burton, Du Plessis, Leggett, Louw, Mistry & Van Vuuren, 2004: 4; StatsSA, 2012: 53).

Another reason why commercial farmers do not report livestock theft cases is, firstly due to the fact that livestock in South Africa, with the exception of some stud breeders, is not insured. Insurance companies either do not provide this type of insurance, or if they do provide it, it is very expensive. The insurance of livestock is not within the scope of this article. However, to understand the extent of the number of livestock theft cases compared to other property-related crimes, it must be taken note of that, for instance, house insurance, is widespread, particularly in urban areas. In the case of most other property-related crimes, the commodity itself is insured. Accordingly, in order for the victim to press a claim for damages the case must be reported to the SAPS, which is not the case with livestock theft that is not insured. As a result, there is no reimbursement-of-loss incentive for them to report livestock theft to the SAPS ‘for insurance purposes’. Hence, the low levels of reporting of livestock theft to the SAPS.

Moreover, there is the fear of fines being imposed on victims of livestock theft, due to the fact that their animals have not been marked in accordance with the requirements of section 7 of the Animal Identification Act No 6 of 2002 (Anon, 2008a: 13; Department of Agriculture, 2008: 2). Livestock owners are also aware of the fact that it is problematic to prove ownership of unmarked/non-branded animals stolen and, therefore, the associated difficulties in reclaiming their stolen livestock (if recovered by the police).

Producers also fail to report thefts because they are unsure of exactly how many livestock are missing. Some believe it is a waste of time reporting crimes because a theft would be impossible to prove, or because of the time lag between the occurrence of the theft and its detection (i.e. becoming aware that stolen livestock is missing).
Changes in modus operandi of livestock theft

In earlier years, livestock was predominantly stolen for survival or “potslagting” [slaughter for the pot], but from the mid-2000s a change in the modus operandi was observed with a movement to the more lucrative larger-scale operations of organised crime syndicates. For many years, in South Africa, stealing largely for the pot has been an ongoing, but largely accepted livestock theft problem. But, after the world economic crisis starting in 2008, the emergence of more ‘organised’ groups that latched onto stock theft as a way of quickly enriching themselves became more evident (Goede, 2012: 1; Gouws, 2012:np; Anon, 2008b: 11; Anon, 2008a: 6 & 8; Clack, 2013: 82 & 88; Doorewaard, Hesselink & Clack, 2015: 38).

This organised livestock theft has evidenced in a modus operandi involving the rounding up of whole herds of livestock from targeted farms, usually at night; their transport by big livestock pantechnicon type truck-and-trailers with the quick delivery to participating abattoirs resulting in the ‘disappearance’ of stolen livestock as evidence in many cases. The ratio of livestock stolen per case further substantiates the assumption of crime syndicates, since the ratio increased from 4.02 livestock stolen per case in 2002/2003 to 7.44 livestock stolen per case in 2014/2015 (Clack, 2016: 8).

From the above data and tables, it is clear that, in rural economic terms, livestock theft in South Africa has a considerable negative impact on agriculture and farming activities and represents a considerable loss to all farmers, whether commercial or subsistence.

In dealing with livestock theft as a rural crime, the policing thereof has largely been outside of the framework of CPFs, community and/or sector policing. The earliest efforts post-1994 of trying to deal with livestock theft in a more organised policing manner occurred on 1 December 1995, when all concerned role-players in the area of livestock theft attended a meeting in Pretoria hosted by the then Minister of Safety and Security, Sydney Mufamadi. The outcome of the meeting was the establishment of the National Livestock Theft Prevention Forum (NSTPF), to be administered by the Red Meat Producers Organisation (RPO). Subsequently a National Instruction, National Instruction 2/1999, was drafted and approved by the SAPS to describe the processes of stock theft investigations and the establishment of the NSTPF, Provincial Stock Theft Prevention Forums and Stock Theft Information Centres (Anon., 1999a: np; Anon., 1999b: 10-13, as cited in Clack, 2018: 3). However, livestock farmers raised concerns that this National Instruction appeared to be superseded by the more general approach of the Rural Safety Plans from 2000 onwards, which were designed to address all crime in rural areas in a holistic way.

Below is a discussion of the efforts to provide formal mechanisms to address not only farm attacks and livestock theft, but all forms of rural crime and violence.

RURAL SAFETY AND SECURITY

The constraints of crime prevention in rural areas are mostly generic the world over in terms of difficult terrain, private farms that might refuse entry equally to strangers, the police and security officers, inaccessible areas, poor roads, erratic communication services, long distances and isolated areas and no electricity. Simply put, the absence of infrastructure in rural areas makes conducting investigations challenging – there are no roads and lights!

In South Africa, rural areas are also underdeveloped and large areas particularly, again, the traditional tribal land areas, are poverty stricken and under resourced, both in an infrastructural and service delivery sense.
The Rural Protection Plan

After 1994, white farmers, previously adequately protected by the formal commando (military) system in rural areas, found that they were increasingly becoming the target of attacks (for various reasons). With the disbandment (announced in 2003) of the commando system, these feelings of insecurity were exacerbated by a seemingly exponential increase in all forms of criminal incidents in rural and farming areas. In some areas/districts, local initiatives to combat rural crime were launched, notably in the Limpopo Province (the former Northern Province), as early as the second half of 1996. These led, in some instances, to regular bi-monthly meetings, to discuss violent crime on farms and smallholdings, being held among the relevant roleplayers (police, army, agricultural unions and the departments of Justice, Correctional Services and Home Affairs).

This resulted in the establishment, by then President, Nelson Mandela, of a Presidential Security Force Task Team (with reference to rural crime), which, after consultation with a variety of interested parties, led in October 1997, to the government implementing a so-called ‘Rural Protection Plan’. Later, in October 1998, this implementation led to the holding of a Rural Safety Summit. The aim of the summit was to “bring all role-players together to find a common strategy to step up the fight against crime, especially violent crime in all farming communities.” (Mandela, 1988: np). The summit adopted a set of resolutions condemning criminal activity affecting rural communities. However, it also recognised that the so-called ‘rural crime’ had many complex root causes. Nonetheless, the summit delegates accepted that the newly formulated Rural Protection Plan should form the foundation and serve as the “operational strategy to combat and prevent violent crimes against farming and rural communities”. Allied to this acceptance was the further recommendation that a formal and comprehensive policy framework be developed – in consultation with all role-players – in order to ensure the long-term safety in rural and farming communities (Schönteich & Steinberg, 2000: 19, 23).

This Plan, while structured primarily around the commando system, aimed at utilising all the relevant structures countrywide that co-ordinated the activities of state agencies, such as the SAPS and SANDF, but with the proviso of pulling in and obtaining the co-operation of organised agriculture bodies such as the Transvaal Agricultural Union (TAU) and Agri-SA. However, these structures were controlled by the state agencies involved in a formal committee structure cascading down from the national and provincial area to ground level (local) Operational Co-ordinating Committees (OCCs) – the being latter chaired by the local police station commander (Schönteich & Steinberg, 2000: 24-25).

The summit established a Rural Safety Task Team comprising the groups that had participated, but it proved largely ineffective, and in February 2000, after representatives of Agri-SA had met with then President, Thabo Mbeki, it was re-activated, but would, as the OCCs did, function within, rather than outside of the police structures (SAPA, 2000a: np).

The Rural Protection Plan had stipulated that the SAPS were, on a regular basis, to visit commercial farms in each rural policing district. But, severe resource constraints (human resource shortages and lack of functioning vehicles – a significant problem in most rural police stations) meant that, in practice, this happened irregularly, if at all. In some rural police stations, it was found that the station commissioner would have upwards of 100 farms as part of the district police responsibilities but could only spare no more than two police officers to fulfil these protection visits. It was also reported that while the police provided visited farmers with advice on safety and security measures, often the farmers preferred to “make their own [security] plans” independent of the police or military (see Manby, 2001: 35-43).

In the assessment research of the Rural Protection Plan, undertaken in 1998/99 by Schönteich and Steinberg (2000), it was found that there were several problems and shortcomings
being encountered in its operational implementation. One of these being the lack of, or reluctance by, farm workers to participate. Sometimes, the local structures deliberately excluded any participation, even if volunteered, by the predominantly black farm workers (or members of their families resident on white-owned farms). Compounding this was the widespread apathy by members of the public to get involved in any security structures, such as the police’s reservist or the commando system (Schönteich & Steinberg, 2000: 50; 80).

There were also problems experienced in terms of ineffective (or absence of) intelligence gathering, detecting and investigation by the police with reference to the more serious forms of rural crime. Schönteich and Steinberg (2000) further reported that a number of senior provincial police officials had openly acknowledged that suspects in farm attacks, if not apprehended by civilians soon after the farm attack, were seldom apprehended, if at all, by the police themselves. Most rural area police stations doing little in terms of gathering intelligence information on rural crime from rural settlements. As a result, station-level intelligence produced little of value with reference to developing rural crime offender profiles. Such information would no doubt have proven useful for reactive police work and investigation. This police shortcoming being further compounded by detectives doing very little follow-up work, especially outside of their policing precinct/district (Schönteich & Steinberg, 2000: 50-53). Accordingly, “as far as reactive detection and investigation are concerned, the SAPS is, thus, contributing little to the rural protection plan” (Schönteich & Steinberg, 2000: 51).

Such drawbacks to more effective and efficient policing were further compounded by other weaknesses in the operational effectiveness of the SAPS, largely due to rural police stations being woefully under resourced all over rural areas. Often, having no operational (in-working-order) patrol vehicles, shortages of staff, the long distances to travel to crime scenes and other operational impediments to effective rural policing (Schönteich & Steinberg, 2000: 79).

The availability of vehicles at station level remains an ongoing issue of debate between organised agriculture and the SAPS. AgriSA, in their most recent annual rural safety report (2017/18), stated that they still regularly receive complaints from their members that there continues to be a shortage of or unavailability of police vehicles at rural station level, partially due to the lengthy turnaround time for repairs and services, which have to be done at the police repair workshops at various provincial headquarter offices (AgriSA, 2018: 61).

Moreover, these operational obstacles being impacted upon by the overall shortage of numbers of detectives (investigators) allocated to rural areas. Those at the rural police stations are overloaded with a whole range of different cases ranging from serious to petty crime. This being further compounded by the shortage of experienced detectives (the tendency being to place ‘rookie’ detectives in rural areas as their first assignment with detectives who have gained experience being transferred to urban areas where crime levels much higher). As a result, often with more serious crimes, the local rural police stations have to rely on specialist detective support from the larger urban centres – which is often not immediately forthcoming resulting in delays in starting investigations occurring due to their own heavy caseloads in the cities. When such serious cases were investigated the forensic evidence samples had first to be sent to the SAPS’ Central Forensic Laboratory in Pretoria, where further delays occurred due to backlogs in analysis. (Schönteich & Steinberg, 2000: 81-82).

**The Farmwatch System**

Because of the lack of or ineffective policing in many of the outlying areas of rural districts (as outlined above), many farmers began to organise their own protection/security system, which became known as Farmwatch. The basis of this system was persuading small groups of neighbouring farmers to join together in ‘security cells/groups’, that is, farmhouses in close
proximity (relatively speaking) to one another and linked on a (citizen band) radio network (to obviate dependence on electricity and telephone lines that could be cut in a crime attack on a farm). In practical terms, in many farming areas, farm owners living along one road or within easy reach of one another formed a committee, and if something untoward happened to one of them, the closest neighbour would be radio-called to render immediate and fast assistance. Most such Farmwatch areas depended on their optimal functioning on the support and co-operation of resident farmworkers (who are often ancillary or secondary victims of criminal attacks on farms). They would participate by going with farm owners to provide assistance to fellow farmers and farmworkers under such attack. Participation also made such farmworkers feel part of the local Farmwatch, as well as being made to feel safer and more secure in the process. Some Farmwatch committees also held informal patrols in an effort to deter strangers entering their areas, even going so far as to demand identification (ID) books from anyone who they felt was not supposed to be in the area (see Manby, 2001: 40).

In August 1999, in an effort to strengthen such self-protection measures, the commercial farmers union, Agri-SA, launched the Agri-Securitas Trust Fund with the aim of “generating funds to protect farming communities throughout South Africa and reverse the growing trend of rural crime”. The Commercial Farmers Union had stated that the fund would directly benefit the “85 000 commercial and small-scale farmers, their families and their workers” (SAPA, 2000b: np).

The Commando System
These initiatives were closely linked to the local (military) commando units – a South African system of army reserve units. Until the early 1990s, all white men in South Africa were required to do compulsory national service in the defence force, and many farmers, therefore, had undergone some form of military training, making the organisation of a military security system at local level a relatively easy task. However, by 2000, in many areas of South Africa, the commando units were no longer that active. Nevertheless, in early 2001, in some areas (KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo provinces, in particular) they were being resuscitated and re-activated. However, this was done specifically to encourage them to perform policing duties (since the police were still woefully understaffed). This was also in response to renewed concerns about the high levels of violent rural crime in the commercial farming areas. Many of the farmers who became involved in the Farmwatch initiatives were also commando members. Nevertheless, the problem of motivation and apathy bedevilled both commando policing and Farmwatch activities in many rural areas. Nevertheless, in the most active areas, there might well be the occurrence of several commando/Farmwatch joint vehicle patrols at night, roadblocks once or twice a week and checkpoints looking for illegal weapons even more frequently. There were also systematic efforts made to obtain information about illegal weapons and stocktheft by means of a funded informer system. In other areas, a commando unit might exist in name only. Low levels of participation were also experienced in some of the poorly resourced and underfunded independent Farmwatch committees (see Schönteich & Steinberg, 2000: 21-22; 77-78; Manby 2001: 41; Steinberg, 2005: 41-48).

Private security in rural areas
The inadequate or ineffective levels of rural policing led many farmers – as generally many other South Africans who could afford such services did – to contract the security services of commercial private security companies to safeguard their property and personal safety. In the early 2000s, many small security companies sprang up in a number of rural areas and small towns. However, like their counterparts in the cities they also had to register these companies and staff with the Private Security Industry Regulatory Authority (PSIRA), and also lost trained and skilled security
officers to the better pay and working conditions in urban areas resulting in either a rapid turnover of security personnel or their demise as ‘going’ concerns lacking the financial muscle to continue operations.

THE RURAL PROTECTION PLAN IN PRACTICE

Farmwatch initiatives
The mix of different security systems for rural safety varies across South Africa. In wealthier areas such as the KwaZulu-Natal coastal belt, where sugar cane is predominantly grown, and the farms are relatively small, farmers tend to employ private security. In remote areas, where the rainfall is low, farms are large, and the profit margins small, private security is prohibitively expensive, and recourse to the commando system was made. In yet other areas, such as Gauteng, where commando units tended to be less under the control of farm owners and to have more black members, white farmers were more likely to rely more on private Farmwatch initiatives, integrated into the rural protection plan through the ground level operational co-ordinating committees. These independent Farmwatches were crucial in assisting the police and the commandos in policing their areas, since without their support and presence in numbers, the police simply would not be able to cope with the rural crime situation. Often the Farmwatch members would be the first to react and arrive at a farm (attack) crime scene (Manby, 2001: 40).

Rural Community Police Forums
The Rural Protection Plan also set out further co-operation structures, namely with the Community Police Forum (CPF) structures. While CPFs have had some successes in improving police-community co-operation, especially in urban areas, overall in rural areas they have had limited success. This apathy towards CPFs in rural areas must, however, also be seen within the unique rural constraints of community participation in many of these structures ranging from long distances, too frequent meetings and prioritisation of other farming matters of more concern to farmers (e.g. lack of co-ordinated action against stock thieves).

A further drawback to application effectiveness of the Rural Protection Plan was the reluctance of some Farmwatch committees to broaden membership and participation to include not only local black farmworkers, but also the headmen and chiefs from adjoining tribal communal lands. There have also been problems ensuring that there is effective co-operation between the different rural groupings with the commandos and Farmwatch cells generally only operating in the commercial farming areas and not attempting to engage with any tribal areas, except for the purpose of conducting raids for illegal weapons or in ‘hot pursuit of a suspect’ (Manby 2001: 40; Schönteich & Steinberg, 2000: 61-63).

However, where small commercial black farmers are increasing in numbers, they have on occasion approached local commando units for assistance in countering stock theft, which affects not only the bigger farm owners, but also labour tenants and subsistence farmers in the communal tribal areas – all also affected as stock owners/farmers by this serious rural crime. In conclusion then, overall success and effectiveness of the Rural Protection Plan has been limited (owing to many of the factors mentioned above).

However, rural areas had in the period 1999-2005 encountered further obstacles to the provision of rural security and safety.

Disbandment of the commandos
The first of these was the disbandment of the commando system. This was formally announced on 10 June 2003 by the Minister of Safety and Security, Charles Nqakula, in his budget vote speech in Parliament. He had merely stated that the commandos would be replaced by:
...a revised SAPS reservist system based on the amended National Instruction for Reservists. This system is linked to various initiatives that form part of the National Crime Combating Strategy’s normalisation phase, such as the drastic increase in the SAPS personnel figures over the next three years, the restructuring of specialised investigation units, the implementation of sector policing and the establishment of crime combating units for each police area (Steinberg, 2005: 1).

This replacement was planned to be phased in over the period, 2003 to 2009, and was to be in the form of a combination of various policing approaches, namely: sector policing supported by area crime combating units and the additional recruitment and use of police reservists (for the purposes of sector policing, a new category of reservists was created, namely urban and rural sector police reservists) and the appointment of additional police members at rural police stations (Burger & Boshoff, 2008: 20).

While organised agriculture was, at the time, assured that in the process of the SAPS replacing the commandos, no commando unit would be closed down (withdrawn) before the police were able to completely take over the security responsibility in a particular area (Burger & Boshoff, 2008: 20-21), this, in reality, did not happen.

A security vacuum?
In research conducted by the Institute for Security Studies between November 2007 and December 2008, it was found that in at least four areas where they had conducted interviews, “a security vacuum had … been created” (Burger, 2012: 64). This conclusion was based primarily on the observation that in none of these four areas had all the measures announced by government in 2003 been fully implemented. In fact, in some areas almost nothing had been done to implement security structures to replace the commando system, irrespective of the fact that the closing down of the local commandos had continued apace (Burger & Boshoff, 2008: 28).

The new system and the National Rural Safety Strategy (NRSS)
The disbandment of the commandos meant that the police were required to replace, not only the ‘system’, but also develop a new plan or strategy to replace the old 1998 Rural Protection Plan. In March 2010, at the rural safety workshop hosted by Agri-SA in Pretoria, the SAPS presented their new draft National Rural Safety Strategy. A major refocus in the new plan was that, whereas the Rural Protection Plan had focused on the farming community, the new strategy emphasised that future attention in combating rural crime would be the whole broad rural community in South Africa and not only on the (commercial) farmers (SAPS, 2011: 3). The new Rural Safety Strategy, released for implementation in July 2011, and planned for full implementation by 2015, was a tacit acknowledgment by the government of the seriousness of the ongoing acts of violence against the rural community, the high levels of stock theft and destruction of infrastructure. The new Rural Safety Strategy also clearly prioritised the overall safety and security of rural communities as a whole. Therefore, the primary aims and objectives of the strategy being to improve safety and security within the total rural environment; to improve relationships with the farming and rural community; to establish a system that would address crime within the rural areas; to improve service delivery within the rural communities; and safeguard the entire rural community against crime or any disaster. Ultimately, this would also all positively impact on and maintain food security. Accordingly, the new safety and security strategy for rural areas was to be based on the following six pillars:
1. adopting a proactive and reactive responsive operational approach;
2. enhanced co-operation and co-ordination between all role players;
3. community safety awareness;
4. rural development;
5. effective communication; and
6. effective investigation and prosecution (SAPS, 2011: 11-12; 18; 24 & 34).

The strategy also had a specific focus on the concept of ‘Sector Policing’ and the further utilisation of police reservists. In an analysis of the new strategy, Boshoff (2010: np) mentions the following: “It is unfortunate that the strategy is based on plans that have failed in the past, not because of the strategy, but because of the inability of the SAPS to implement it and a lack of resources.”

In addition, “Sector Policing often does not go any further than phase two: the identification of the sectors. The moment phase three is implemented, namely the allocation of resources, personnel and equipment, the strategy ends because of a lack of resources.” (Boshoff, 2010: np)

According to Boshoff (2010: np), the main challenge to ensure that the new strategy worked was the need for two crucial capabilities, namely: house-and-hearth protection and an area-bound dedicated reaction force (such as was provided by actively functioning local commandos). Although the strategy mentions ‘house-and-heart’ protection (i.e. security and safety awareness initiatives), it does not empower the farmers (or, as per the new strategy, the rural inhabitants) with the means, knowledge and ability to protect themselves. This includes radio communication, issuing and providing individual members of the public with firearms for self-defence (as the commandos provided to its members), or a communication link to a dedicated reaction force. Boshoff (2010: np), further states that the strategy also failed to address the crucial issue of setting up a dedicated area-bound reaction unit in each local area in the rural communities.

What are the practical implications on the ground? In both rural and urban areas, the public have tended to accept and come to terms with the fact that the police simply do not have the capacity or the capabilities to implement, operate and resource sector policing adequately. Communities and farmers have simply returned to funding and utilising their own available resources in order to implement some form of community/sector policing by establishing their own sector operational centres, voluntarily operating them (for no remuneration), and buying, installing and equipping such radio communication capabilities (to mobile patrols, individual farms and houses). After the 2010 rollout of sector policing nationally, owing to the lack of adequate services in rural areas, many of them have resorted to resuscitating farm patrolling activities. Community members were also identified and put on standby rosters to be called upon as a dedicated reaction capability. However, these reaction/response team members have the obvious limitation of not having powers of arrest, search and suspect detention and no peace officer powers at all (unless appointed as such by the National Commissioner of Police) (Boshoff, 2010: np).

The government undertaking in the National Rural Safety Strategy was that the police would replace the commandos by putting in place the following alternatives:

- a revised SAPS reservist system based on an amendment of the National Instruction for Reservists;
- a substantial increase in SAPS personnel figures;
- the implementation of sector policing;
- the restructuring of specialised investigation units; and
- the establishment of area crime combating units (Burger, 2012: 65).
Compounding problems of not implementing policy

Sector Policing (as part of the Community Policing policy/strategy) had only formally been rolled out countrywide in mid-2010 – mainly in response to the demands for added policing capabilities and increased security to be implemented leading up to the FIFA Soccer World Cup held in South Africa that year. Its rollout was also largely in urban as opposed to rural areas (Minnaar, 2010: 200).

The new National Rural Safety Strategy (NRSS) came into effect as from July 2011, but its national operational non-implementation (only rolled-out in certain areas piecemeal) was further exacerbated by the lack of policy revision. By March 2013, the revised National Instruction on Police Reservists had not yet been finalised or sent out to all police stations countrywide for comment (there are still delays and no finalisation of such had been done by July 2016).

Regarding the 2003 announcement (as part of the disbandment of the commandos and as a replacement for them) that area crime combating units would be established, in effect, this merely resulted in the renaming of the Public Order Policing (POP) units and giving them a slightly different mandate. This ‘new’ mandate included, among their other operational duties, the responsibility for follow-up operations after farm attacks. The POP units, tasked to manage public events and marches, had undergone two major restructuring actions (2001 and 2006). At the time of these restructuring actions, there had been a perceived reduction in public protests, but in the light of the increased levels of (rural) crime, a decision had been taken that these units would be used in support of the implementation of the National Crime Combating Strategy (NCCS) (launched in 2000). In being renamed (in 2001) as Area Crime Combating Units (ACCU) and renamed after the 2006 restructuring as Crime Combating Units (CCUs), the POP units effectively had their primary focus changed to crime prevention and combating operations – in other words, their original crowd management focus became a secondary function. In effect, this was an expedient manner of finding a replacement for the reaction force capability of the disbanded commandos (Burger, 2012: 66-67; Burger & Boshoff, 2008: 15). Their crime combating capabilities were further impacted on by the reduction during this period (1999-2006) of the total number of operational personnel from 1383 to 614 (Omar, 2007: 25).

Further developments impacting on limiting any CCU deployment for rural protection duties being that during 2011/12 there were on average three violent public crowd management incidents occurring every day in South Africa. This required the CCUs to be fully deployed for crowd management and public order operations to police the urban protest incidents (largely service delivery protests emanating mostly from informal settlement areas and the townships) (Burger, 2012: 67).

All these developments, including the decision to close the commandos, effectively had a negative impact on the ability of the SAPS to police the agricultural sector and rural areas, let alone have an effect on reducing high levels of crime in these areas. This has been evident in a further deterioration of rural policing services by the prioritisation of combating the urban focus crimes (the so-called ‘trio crimes’ of house robberies, vehicle hijacking and cash-in-transit heists).

RURAL SAFETY STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION: POST-2011

For the period 2011-2017, rural policing has had mixed results with constant complaints by agricultural organisations (including AfriForum) that the police were neglecting rural areas or not fully implementing all the six pillars of the 2011 National Rural Safety Strategy. The National Rural Safety Strategy as approved in 2010 was planned to be fully implemented in all rural areas by the 2015/16 financial year. But, there were constant delays due to a number of constraints within the SAPS, ranging from financial, rural under resourcing, to changes within top management (i.e. suspension of National Commissioner Phiyega in October 2015 and appointment of Acting
National Commissioner Phahlane, his replacement as Acting National Commissioner by Lesetja Mothiba in June 2017 and then finally the appointment as National Commissioner in December 2017 of Khehla Sitole – all of which disrupted implementation of policies throughout the SAPS).

In 2016, as part of Acting National Commissioner Phahlane’s ‘Back to Basics’ Plan, a review of the National Rural Safety Strategy was undertaken within the overall government realignment recommended by the National Development Plan (NDP: 2030). This involved stakeholder engagement sessions in all nine provinces and attended by internal and external role players. Also, as part of Phahlane’s Back to Basics Plan, rural safety, including incidents of violence on farms and smallholdings, was prioritised.

However, in a report to the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Policing on 26 August 2016 the SAPS had reported on the implementation status of the Rural Safety Strategy that indicated that out of a total of 1 140 police stations countrywide, 479 police stations were based in rural areas and 405 in a rural/urban mix. Of these, a total of 794 had fully implemented the requirements as per the four pillars of: i) enhanced service delivery; ii) integrated approach, iii) community safety awareness; and iv) rural development; with 81 having partial implementation and only nine reporting that there had been no implementation at all (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2016: np).

The implementation status report was based on a set of criteria questions posed to each Station Commissioner, namely whether the following had been implemented:

i. Has a Provincial and Cluster Rural Safety Priority Committee been established?

ii. Has a Rural Safety Co-ordinator been appointed (in writing) to co-ordinate all rural policing activities? (an appointed Sector Commander could also be appointed as a Rural Safety Co-ordinator).

iii. Has a Rural Safety Plan been developed in co-operation with all stakeholders to address crime in the rural community in an integrated manner (mobilisation orders/activation plans)?

iv. Are rural safety meetings facilitated with the rural community to create awareness and enhance access, response and service delivery?

v. Has a capability been established to respond to incidents in the rural community as well as to plan and execute joint crime prevention operations to address crime in the rural community, including stock theft (Visible Policing members, Tactical Response Team, Public Order Policing Unit and/or Stock Theft Unit in accordance with Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)?

vi. Have joint crime prevention programmes/projects and operations been implemented in co-operation with all role-players to address contributing factors influencing crime and crime in general (Government, Non-Governmental Organisations and the rural community)? (SAPS, 2016: np).

One of the proactive measures being enforced at rural police stations was the national instruction that all acts of violence against person(s) on farm(s) and smallholdings had to be reported to the SAPS Visible Policing Division within 24 hours. However, one of the drawbacks to faster implementation had been the slow recruitment of additional numbers of police reservists with the final policy on reservists only being approved at the beginning of 2016. But, the allocation of rural police reservists to their local rural police stations was being hampered since their recruitment was
difficult as some farmers would not allow their farm workers to also work as reservists (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2016: np).

During this implementation period, there also occurred the slow establishment in some provinces of Community Safety Forums (CSFs). CSFs are responsible for facilitating a multi-sectoral government approach to the safety of communities. In other words, the CSF approach being broader and more inclusive than that of Community Police Forums (CPFs) since they include all the departments in the JCPS cluster (the departments of: Defence and Military Veterans; Police; Justice and Correctional Services; Home Affairs; State Security; and Finance, as well as representatives from the National Joint Operational and Intelligence Structure (NATJOINTS)) (AgriSA, 2018: 63).

A focus on extending the reach of the criminal justice system for application in rural areas saw the training in 2017 of 87 state prosecutors at the Justice College by the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) to specifically deal with stock theft cases. It was hoped this would speed up and reduce backlogs of livestock theft cases and increase the rate of successful prosecutions in the courts (AgriSA, 2018: 63).

To further improve safety and security, AgriSA had, in 2017, started the planning (in conjunction with Fidelity private security company) for a national protection system. The plan being to incorporate every farm into a home alarm system that can be effectively monitored using new technology platforms and Wi-Fi capabilities in centralised or linked control rooms all over the country from where assistance (rapid tactical response teams) could be summoned. This envisaged security system would focus on the provision of: monitoring of alarm systems countrywide; armed response with specialised tactical intervention teams including technical support and forensic investigations capabilities – such teams backed up by tactical aerial support. The services to include private investigations, taking of statements, compiling dockets and processing this collected information and then liaising with the police and SAPS specialist units to ensure that the perpetrators of all rural crime be timeously arrested and successfully prosecuted. Such activities to then also include the monitoring of progress made with cases on the court register. If such a system was fully implemented, it was the fervent belief of AgriSA that a firm grip on finally reducing all rural crime to negligible levels (AgriSA, 2018: 66).

CONCLUSION
Whatever the diverse and divergent views on the issues of farm attacks, farm murders and farm security or the policing of rural areas by the various sectors of the rural communities, it does not detract from the fact that rural residents, whether farm owners, farm workers, those living on communal (tribal) lands or small-town residents, are equally entitled to protection from the depredations of all forms of crime. However, in general, it would appear that, since the almost full completion in all rural police stations of the implementation of the Rural Safety Plan by the end of 2016, policing of all rural crime (including farm attacks and livestock theft) has shown annual improvement in terms of effectiveness and improved service delivery, which has impacted overall on better response rates to rural crime being experienced by rural communities across the country.

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ENDNOTES:

1. AfriForum is an organisation linked to the Solidarity trade union. It was established in 2006 to encourage the re-engagement of the Afrikaners and other minorities in the public sphere. It promotes the protection of Afrikaner culture (see https://www.afriforum.co.za/tuis/).

2. As from 2013 AfriForum began collecting their own statistics on farm attacks/farm murders and from that year combined theirs with TAAU (Roets, 2018: 36).

3. At the time Duxita Mistry and Jabu Dhlamini were senior researcher and contract researcher respectively at the Institute for Human Rights and Criminal Justice Studies at the TechnikonSA. Subsequently both were appointed in April 2001 to the Special Committee of Inquiry into Farm Attacks.

4. Among the interview questions asked of them were the following: Family background; circumstances surrounding the attacks; their emotional state before, during and after the attack; reasons for targeting particular farms; their knowledge about security on those farms; and involvement in other crimes.

5. The term ‘house robbery’ is defined as a robbery at a residential premise where the residence is simultaneously occupied when the robbery occurs and is usually accompanied by violence perpetrated by the robbers against the occupants (as opposed to a burglary being theft by breaking-and-entry of a residence where occupants are absent) (see Zinn, 2008).

6. On a yearly basis during the November meeting of the NSTF, the average monetary value of livestock is determined, which is then used for the next year to calculate the economic impact of livestock theft on the farming community by calculating that year’s average market prices at auction of the various types of livestock. These values do not take into account the loss of future breeding herds and genetic stock (Clack, 2016: 11).

7. See the National Instruction of the South African Reserve Police Service, No. 1 of 2002

LIST OF REFERENCES

Anon. 1999a. Minutes of meeting to address the rise in stock theft. South African Police Service


